

Fri Mar 18

Document A

Source: Chart created from various sources.

Athens and Rome: Who Could Be a Citizen?

	Athens	Roman Republic	Requirements
Free, native-born adult males	Yes	Yes	Athens: If parents were free-born Athenians Rome: If parents were married in certain areas of Roman Empire
Free, native-born adult females	No	Yes	Rome: But had limited rights. Could own property, but could not vote or hold public office.
Free, native-born male children	No	Yes	Athens: First, had to complete education and two years of military training before being granted citizenship Rome: At birth, if parents were citizens
Female children	No	Yes	Rome: At birth if parents were citizens
Slaves	No	No	
Freed slaves	No	No	
Sons of freed slaves	No	Yes	

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Document Analysis

1. What was required for an adult male to become a citizen of Athens? A Roman male?
2. Could women become citizens in Athens and Rome? Could slaves?
3. In which society were children granted citizenship?
4. In your opinion, which system, Athens or Rome, was more generous in granting citizenship to its people? Explain.

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Document C

Source: From a speech by Claudius, Emperor of Rome, 48 CE and other varied sources.

In Athens, once citizenship was granted, citizens enjoyed equal rights and full political participation. In the Roman Republic, not all citizens received the same rights or the same political participation. But there is a reason for this. Hear first the words of Emperor Claudius responding to criticism for giving citizenship to the people of Gaul (modern-day France) soon after conquering them:

“What was the ruin of Sparta and Athens, but this, that mighty as they were in war, they spurned from them as aliens [foreigners] those whom they had conquered? Our founder Romulus, on the other hand, was so wise that he fought as enemies and then hailed as fellow-citizens several nations on the very same day.”

In other words, the Athenians were more stingy with their citizenship. The Romans more freely gave it away. But they gave it away in measured amounts.

For example:

1. *Latini* – people from regions outside Rome but on the Italian peninsula – were granted a class of citizenship with the right to do business and to travel and live within the Empire but not to an official Roman marriage.
2. *Foederati* – citizens of states with treaty obligations with Rome – were given limited rights in return for performing military service.
3. *Peregrini* – foreigners in conquered lands – could be given full or partial citizenship. Claudius did give citizenship to the people of Gaul after he conquered them.

Document Analysis

1. According to Claudius, what was the ruin of Athens?
2. How might Claudius argue that giving citizenship and high office to conquered Gauls would be good for Rome?
3. The document says that the Romans sometimes gave away citizenship rights in measured amounts. Use an example to explain what this means.
4. How could you use this document to argue that Rome had a better system of citizenship than Athens?
5. How could you use this document to argue that Athens had a better system of citizenship than Rome?

Citizenship in Athens and Rome: Which Was the Better System?

About 500 BCE, on the Greek and Italian peninsulas of the Mediterranean Sea, a new idea began to take shape. This was the notion that people were **citizens** of a state or empire, and that being a citizen meant not only meeting certain responsibilities, but also enjoying certain rights. Before this time, in places like Egypt, Babylonia, and ancient China, individuals were generally regarded as **subjects**, not as citizens. Power was largely in the hands of a pharaoh, king, or emperor and the thousands of administrators who carried out the ruler's command. But by the sixth century BCE, a new idea was emerging: that ordinary people should play a more significant role in the life of the state, or nation.

Citizenship is a status, or standing, given by a government to some or all of its people. In the modern world, citizenship often involves a balance between individual rights, such as the right to vote, and individual responsibilities, such as the duty to serve one's country. This balance has been called the **social contract theory of citizenship**. The individual does his or her part; the nation or state does its part.

It is probably accurate to say that in the **city-state** of Athens, the emphasis was more on citizen responsibility than citizen rights. The great Athenian leader Pericles (495-429 BCE) said that Athenians who did not fully participate in voting, political debate, and holding office were "useless." The Greek **philosopher** Aristotle did him one better by declaring such Athenians to be beasts. It seems that many Athenians agreed. Participating in government and making

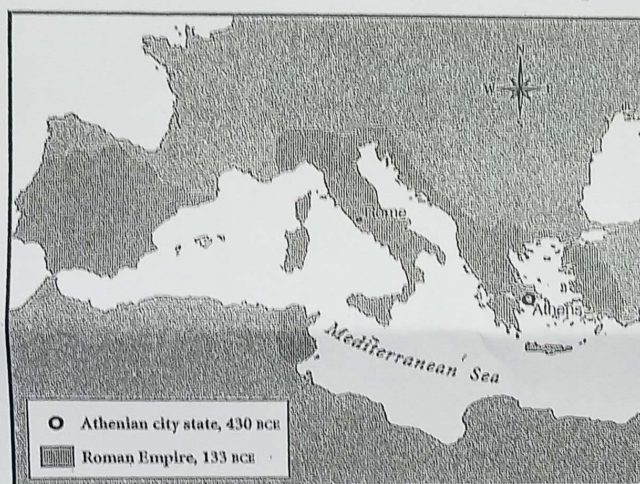
the city-state work was simply what good citizens should do. Citizenship was an action verb.

In Rome, the idea of a good citizen was a bit different. During the years of the Roman Republic, from 509 BCE until roughly 27 BCE, Roman citizenship qualifications and rights fluctuated but hovered around those described in this Mini-Q. Unlike Athenians, a Roman citizen was judged more by how he behaved with his family, his neighbors, and his property. A Roman citizen who did not participate in local government would not likely have been called a beast.

It is important to note that comparing Athens and Rome is in some ways like comparing a flea and an elephant. Athens in 400 BCE had a population of about 300,000, including slaves. The Roman Empire had an estimated

population in 1 CE of about 45,000,000, perhaps 15 percent of the world's population. Athens, a land-locked city-state, was about the size of Rhode Island. The **Roman Republic** (see map) was huge.

In both Athens and Rome, citizenship was something to be honored and protected. Not everyone could have it, and those who did had a special relationship to the state. The documents that follow should help deepen your understanding of how Athenians and Romans viewed the matter. Imagine life as a citizen of Athens and as a citizen of Rome. Then address the question: *Citizenship in Athens and Rome: Which was the better system?*



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Background Essay Questions

1. What two Mediterranean societies are being compared? During what approximate time period?
2. The essay says that citizenship often strikes a balance between rights and responsibilities. Give an example of a citizen's rights and an example of his or her responsibilities.
3. What point was being made by the Athenians Pericles and Aristotle when they used the words "useless" and "beast"?
4. What was the difference in population and area between the city-state of Athens and the Roman Republic?
5. Can you make a logical guess how size might affect a nation's willingness to grant citizenship?
6. Define these terms:

citizen

subject

social contract theory of citizenship

city-state

philosopher

Roman Republic

Timeline

- 753 BCE** – Traditional date for the founding of Rome
- 500s BCE** – Establishment of direct democracy in Athens
- 509 BCE** – Beginning of Roman Republic
- 443 BCE** – Office of the censor created in Rome
- 431 BCE** – Pericles Funeral Oration praising Athenian democracy
- 300s and 200s BCE** – Democracy maintained, but Athens heyday over
- 287 – 133 BCE** – Senate supreme in Rome: focus on military and diplomacy
- 27 BCE** – End of Roman Republic, beginning of Roman Empire